



**COUNTY OF LOS ANGELES
DEPARTMENT OF AUDITOR-CONTROLLER**

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July 18, 2012

TO: Supervisor Zev Yaroslavsky, Chairman
Supervisor Gloria Molina
Supervisor Mark Ridley-Thomas
Supervisor Don Knabe
Supervisor Michael D. Antonovich

FROM: Wendy L. Watanabe
Auditor-Controller

A handwritten signature in blue ink that reads "Wendy L. Watanabe".

SUBJECT: **HELPLINE YOUTH COUNSELING, INC. – A DEPARTMENT OF
MENTAL HEALTH CONTRACT SERVICE PROVIDER – CONTRACT
COMPLIANCE REVIEW – FISCAL YEAR 2010-11**

We completed a contract compliance review of Helpline Youth Counseling, Inc. (HYC or Agency), which covered a sample of billings from May and June 2011. The Department of Mental Health (DMH) contracts with HYC to provide mental health services, including interviewing Program clients, assessing their mental health needs, and implementing treatment plans. The purpose of our review was to determine whether HYC complied with its contract terms, and appropriately accounted for and spent DMH Program funds providing the services outlined in their County contract.

DMH paid HYC approximately \$213,000 on a cost-reimbursement basis for Fiscal Year (FY) 2010-11. The Agency provides services in the Second Supervisorial District.

Results of Review

HYC maintained adequate documentation to support the services billed to DMH, and staff assigned to the DMH Program had the required qualifications. The Agency also completed the Progress Notes in accordance with the County contract. However, HYC did not always complete the Assessments and Client Care Plans as required. Specifically, HYC:

- Did not adequately describe the clients' symptoms and behaviors to support the diagnosis in seven (47%) of the 15 Assessments reviewed.

- Did not develop objectives or goals that related to the clients' diagnosis and their Assessments in 14 (93%) of the 15 Client Care Plans reviewed.
- Did not develop specific Mental Health goals for nine (60%) of the 15 Client Care Plans reviewed.

HYC's attached response indicates that the Agency is providing additional supervision and weekly training to all Program staff to ensure that the Assessments and Client Care Plans are completed in accordance with the DMH contract.

Details of our review, along with recommendation for corrective action, are attached.

Review of Report

We discussed our report with HYC and DMH. HYC's attached response indicates that they agree with our findings and recommendation.

We thank HYC for their cooperation and assistance during our review. Please call me if you have any questions, or your staff may contact Don Chadwick at (213) 253-0301.

WLW:JLS:DC:EB

Attachments

c: William T Fujioka, Chief Executive Officer
Dr. Marvin J. Southard, Director, Department of Mental Health
Deepak Nanda, Chair, Board of Directors, HYC
Jeffrey Farber, Executive Director, HYC
Public Information Office
Audit Committee

**HELPLINE YOUTH COUNSELING, INC.
DEPARTMENT OF MENTAL HEALTH
FISCAL YEAR 2010-11**

BILLED SERVICES

Objective

Determine whether Helpline Youth Counseling, Inc. (HYC or Agency) provided the services billed to the Department of Mental Health (DMH) in accordance with their DMH contract.

Verification

We selected 30 billings, totaling 2,030 minutes, from 12,878 service minutes of approved Medi-Cal billings for May and June 2011, which were the most current billings available at the time of our review (March 2012). We reviewed the Assessments, Client Care Plans, and Progress Notes in the clients' charts for the selected billings. The 1,901 minutes represent services provided to 15 clients.

Results

HYC maintained adequate documentation to support the services billed and completed their Progress Notes in accordance with their DMH contract requirements. However, the Agency did not comply with all DMH contract requirements.

Assessments

HYC did not adequately describe the clients' symptoms and behaviors consistent with the Diagnostic and Statistical Manual of Mental Disorder (DSM) to support the diagnosis in seven (47%) of the 15 Assessments reviewed. The DSM is a handbook published by the American Psychiatric Association for mental health professionals, which lists different categories of mental disorder and the criteria for diagnosing them. The DMH contract requires the Agency to follow the DSM when diagnosing clients.

Client Care Plans

HYC did not complete some elements of 14 (93%) of the 15 Client Care Plans reviewed in accordance with their DMH contract. Specifically:

- Fourteen Client Care Plans for Targeted Case Management did not contain specific objectives meeting the criteria for SMART (Specific, Measurable, Attainable, Realistic, and Time bound) objectives or goals that related to clients' diagnosis or Assessments.
- Nine Client Care Plans did not contain specific mental health goals.

The number of exceptions exceeds the total number of Client Care Plans reviewed because some Client Care Plans had multiple exceptions.

Recommendation

1. **HYC management ensure that Assessments and Client Care Plans are completed in accordance with their DMH contract.**

STAFFING QUALIFICATIONS

Objective

Determine whether HYC's treatment staff had the required qualifications to provide the services.

Verification

We reviewed the California Board of Behavioral Sciences' website and/or the personnel files for all 11 HYC treatment staff, who provided services to DMH clients during May and June 2011.

Results

Each employee had the qualifications required to provide the billed services.

Recommendation

None.



June 12, 2012


Wendy L. Watanabe
Los Angeles County Auditor-Controller
Countywide Contract Monitoring Division
Kenneth Hahn Hall of Administration
500 West Temple Street, Room 525
Los Angeles, California 90012

Dear Ms. Watanabe:

On behalf of Helpline Youth Counseling (HYC), we thank you for the opportunity to work in partnership with the County of Los Angeles through a contract with the Department of Mental Health to provide mental health services to eligible clients. We have reviewed the contract compliance review report issued by your department regarding a sample of billings for May and June 2011. Following is our response to the recommendation that Helpline management ensure that Assessments and client Care Plans are completed in accordance with their DMH contract.

We greatly appreciate the support and guidance that we have received from the Los Angeles County Departments of Auditor-Controller and Mental Health and look forward to continuing to work together in partnership to provide mental health services to residents of Los Angeles County. Please feel free to contact me at (562) 864-3722 if you require any additional information.

Sincerely,



Jeff Farber
Executive Director

Helpline Youth Counseling, Inc.
A CALIFORNIA NON-PROFIT CORPORATION
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BILLED SERVICES

ASSESSMENTS/CLIENT CARE PLANS

Assessments

Helpline did not adequately describe the clients' symptoms and behaviors consistent with the Diagnostic and Statistical Manual of Mental Disorder (DSM) to support the diagnosis in seven (47%) of the 15 Assessments reviewed.

Client Care Plans

Helpline did not complete some elements of 14 (93%) of the 15 Client Care Plans in accordance with their DMH Contract. Specifically, fourteen Client Care Plans for Targeted Care Management did not contain specific objectives meeting the criteria for SMART (Specific, Measurable, Attainable, Realistic, and Time bound) or goals that related to clients' diagnosis or Assessments nine Client Care Plans did not contain specific mental health goals.

Recommendation

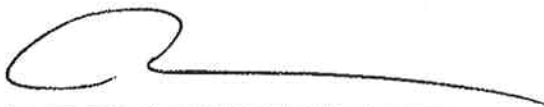
Helpline Management ensure that the Assessments and Client Care Plans are completed in accordance with their DMH contract.

Corrective Action Plan

In response to the findings listed above, Helpline management has developed the following corrective action plan:

- a. Helpline provides clinical supervision to DMH clinical staff, including two hours of scheduled group supervision and one hour of scheduled individual supervision per staff. All clinical supervision has been provided by our Clinical Supervisor, a Licensed Clinical Psychologist. An additional Clinical Supervisor, who is a Licensed Clinical Social Worker, has also assisted with Clinical Supervision as needed. To ensure greater clinical efficacy, the Clinical Supervisor has begun providing weekly training during supervision on the specific topics of Assessment and Diagnostic Criteria to ensure that all staff have an accurate understanding of clinical assessment and diagnosis. In order to ensure that all diagnoses are consistent with the DSM, the focus of training has been on inclusion and proper documentation of all necessary symptoms and behaviors to support the diagnosis specified in the performed Assessment. Upon completion, each Assessment is then reviewed by the Program Manager, a licensed MFT, and by the Clinical Supervisor to ensure accuracy prior to final approval and signature by the Clinical Supervisor. The Clinical Supervisor has been working with staff on sharpening and enhancing their clinical interviewing skills and detailed reporting of symptoms and behaviors to support diagnoses presented in assessments. Also, the Program Manager and Clinical Supervisor are providing staff with continuous training on SMART goals development (for example, staff are being asked during clinical supervision to specifically identify mental health goals utilizing the SMART format in the Client Care Plans).

- b. All staff providing services under the DMH contract are provided clinical supervision by a primary clinical supervisor who is designated as the DMH Clinical Supervisor. All group and individual supervision are thus provided under this Supervisor's jurisdiction. Assigning a designated person to be the DMH Clinical Supervisor allows for program consistency, for the supervisor to identify common areas of improvement needed across the program and for specific training to be scheduled on a monthly, or as needed basis, for the DMH-assigned staff. To ensure that staff are providing services and documenting those services in accordance with the DMH contractual requirements, the Clinical Supervisor and Program Manager conduct detailed monthly Quality Assurance reviews of client file documentation, which also include peer reviews and randomized case file auditing.
- c. To further build staff capacity and ensure that services and documentation are provided in accordance with DMH contractual requirements, Helpline will request additional training from the DMH Service Area 7 Chief. Helpline is also committed to sending staff to any and all pertinent trainings offered by DMH and other institutes in order to ensure the continuing education and competency development of staff and supervisors.
- d. After careful analysis of the review results, it was found that a majority of the cases (fourteen out of fifteen) had been assigned to Master's level interns, who were receiving their clinical training at the agency. Helpline Management recognizes that the DMH program requires the highest level of qualified and trained clinicians to provide quality service. Given this finding, Helpline decided immediately to transition all of its DMH cases from interns to more experienced, licensed and/or license-track Master's level clinicians (MSW/MFT) to ensure the highest level of care and service provision. All DMH clients are now being seen by Helpline licensed or license-track Master's level clinical staff (MSW/MFT) and not by interns in training. This practice has been in place since the beginning of March 2012.
- e. Beginning in July 2012, Helpline will be utilizing Exym as our software vendor. Exym provides clinical management and EDI capability to many DMH-contract agencies. Utilization of Exym will assist with prompting staff to include and input important information such as specific symptomology or goals related to the treatment of a client. Clinical standards will be better enforced across the program and our organization in general so that documentation will be completed in a consistent and accountable manner. The design features of Exym will help to us to create a "best practice" system of effective communication and accountability between Helpline Management (Clinical Supervisor, Program Manager and Quality Control Director, and Director of Programs) and staff, allowing us to proactively identify any problem areas that need to be addressed through training and supervision.



Jeff Farber
Executive Director

Date

6/12/12